

**THE MEDICAL FORUM. A MONTHLY
JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE
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KANSAS CITY, MO., JANUARY, 1907**

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THE MEDICAL FORUM

A Monthly Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Medical Profession.

Vol. IV. KANSAS CITY, MO., JANUARY, 1907. No. 1.

ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

PULSATILLA.*

BY T. H. HUDSON, M.D.

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When I think of *pulsatilla*, I think of an April day—sunshine and shower, wind and calm, gusty weather, fickle and uncertain. The sun now shining from an almost cloudless sky, whose soft, deep blue looks warm and tender; now overcast by a dark and swiftly flying cloud, out of which large, feathery snow-flakes fall upon greening grass and bursting buds.

The plant is known as the wind-flower, and is very appropriately so called by reason of its inconstancy, fickleness—bobbing and bowing, catering to every influence, swinging and swaying, yielding to every passing breeze. This unstableness and changeableness of the flower is typical of the character of the person to whom it is best adapted. When I think of *pulsatilla*, my mental eye sees the picture of a girl nearing sixteen; just budding into womanhood; fair-haired, blue-eyed, yet bright-eyed; eyes that can laugh and do laugh, yet are fitter for a mist of tears, and from whose blue depths the mists gather as suddenly and fall as precipitately as April showers.

Now in this metaphorical, allegorical, symbolical picture which my imagination has painted for you I have used more than a hundred words, which some matter-of-fact Thomas Gradgrind

*Lecture delivered to the Students of the Kansas City Hahnemann Medical College.

of a *Materia Medica* lecturer would say is all wind. Very well; it is the wind-flower we are talking about. Besides, you may let pass as soon as you please metaphor, simile, figure of speech and picture, provided you retain the general characteristics of the remedy, the class of people to whom they apply and the kind of diseases which they will cure. For my part, I admire pictures, and the study and matching of pictures is the life-long business and duty of a homeopathic prescriber.

Other remedies besides *pulsatilla* remind me of types of people. For example, *nux vomica* paints me the picture of a man—a banker or business man, who is growing prematurely old, not so much from work as worry; a man with a square face, a firm under jaw and a lean, angular body. His face, if not ruddy (for our typical *nux* man is of bilious temperament), should at least be free of lines and seams and the crow's-feet of worry. His complexion could at least be clear, instead of muddy, if he would lock his business up behind him when he leaves his counting-house. But he takes it home with him, takes it to the parlor, and it makes him irascible and irritable; takes it to the dinner-table, where he bolts his food, forgetful and regardless of its flavor; hunkers down over the viands with knitted brow and a "shut your mouth and eat your vittles" expression; tells no jokes, invites no stories, takes no condiment with his food except salt and pepper, than which table chit-chat is better than too much of either, especially pepper; hurries through and off to bed, where kind Nature asserts herself and grants him a respite from the carking cares which at three o'clock in the morning wake him to another day of toil and care. The science of medicine will select *nux vomica* for this type, and the art of prescribing will advise a double lock and bolt on business affairs after business hours; an open mouth and "eat your vittles," a joke, a story, a laugh between courses, a cigar and a dreamy half-hour, some light literature or a nap after each meal, this and such advice as this (suited to the individual case) is as much the physician's province and business as the selection of the appropriate remedy.

To return to *pulsatilla* and to our blue-eyed maiden. We find them congenial companions. As the flowering plant is so easily influenced by every passing breeze, so is the fair-haired damsel at the blushing, budding period the subject of whim and

caprice, inconstant and unreliable, changeful of mood and uncertain of temper, laughing and crying, in smiles and tears—gay and happy one minute, sad and sorrowful the next; thoughtless and careless now, now brooding over some imaginary trouble—imaginary troubles answering as well as real ones, for our pulsatilla patient is a sensitive plant. When our girl gets sick, she is very sick. Pain is very painful. Delayed menstruation means despondency and tearfulness; dysmenorrhœa means weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. Suffering means lamentation and loud outcries, for, unlike the ignatia brunette who weeps and weeps alone, our blue-eyed divinity wants the world to weep with her. She wants sympathy and condolence, and is better when she gets it, for she is a clinging vine and must have support. Needing support, she gets married, marries young, marries the first man who caters to her impulsiveness and humors her whims. Now, whether she marries a rich man or a poor one, a good husband or a bad one, let her live high and eat rich food that she cannot digest or live humbly and dine on homely fare, she is still a pulsatilla patient, and if her troubles do not manifest themselves in the gastric sphere, they will find other centers for expression and other forms of complaint. Let her rear a family at the rate of a child every couple of years and she breaks down, becomes nervously exhausted. Domestic duties and family cares are something more than imaginary troubles, and even these are magnified, and so we have a patient—a woman less than thirty years old, with a family of five or six children, too many for any woman at that age. These and the care of them and other cares, real and imaginary, have made her prematurely old. She is weak, nervous, tremulous, easily chilled, or, rather, constantly chilly, yet cannot endure a warm room.

Nothing is more characteristic of a pulsatilla patient than repugnance to a warm, close room and a desire for the open, cool air. Carbo veg. wants fresh air and an abundance of it, but wants it especially inside—in the lungs. Pulsatilla wants it inside and out, all around and all over; wants it not only fresh, but cool. How are you to remember this? By remembering the why of it. Comprehensive and voluminous as some of our *Materia Medica*s are, they would be somewhat shorter if they were a little longer; that is, they would make the work of the student, as well

as that of the practitioner, easier by aiding his memory, if they explained the why and wherefore of some of the symptoms. Let us analyze this symptom of *pulsatilla*. Chilly, yet wants to be out in the open, cool air (a paradox). Why is she chilly? Because of venous and capillary congestion. Being chilly, why does she want cool air? The veins and capillaries are full, engorged, distended, dilated. The blood in its return journey to the heart moves too slowly; the walls of the vessels are too wide apart; the valves do not lift all the blood because the caliber of the vessel is too large. Cold contracts these vessels, narrows their caliber, enables the valves to sweep clear across from wall to wall; hurries the column of blood on to the heart, from whence next moment in the lungs it has parted from its stagnant debris, thrown off its effete matter and exchanged its livid hue for a scarlet glow—thus warming the body by purifying the blood and obviating the necessity of hurrying its circulation by contraction of the vessels' caliber.

Now then, you have not only a symptom which runs all through *pulsatilla* and which symptom you have had often and often, over and over, but you have also a reason which if you have not had will be of service not only in remembering a prominent and thorough-going symptom, but will also enable you to reason out some other things.

For example, why is a *pulsatilla* patient liable to varicose veins and hemorrhoids? Your answer is found in your knowledge of the turgid and dilated condition of the veins and capillaries. Why is she sad, tearful, resigned and willing to submit rather than contend? (The books all tell you that she is of a submissive disposition.) Because not only are the external vessels and the hemorrhoidal veins inflated, but the deeper as well. The portal system is sluggish and the liver torpid, and you know we do not expect vivacious, witty, humorous, fun-loving and fun-making people with torpid livers. Back of the liver, spleen, kidneys, pancreas, heart, stomach, inside and outside—over all and above all, the center of all is the brain, and we cannot expect activity there with sluggishness everywhere else, and so cerebral circulation is slow and sluggish; and if this brain must work, work hard and work long (for our whilom blue-eyed beauty may be a widow now, with orphans to support, whose care means the exercise of

brain as well as brawn), then we have developing other mental symptoms besides somberness and sadness. We have dejection, despair, hopelessness, melancholia, mania and a mad-house. Many a woman goes insane whom pulsatilla would save. Many are the mothers now in an asylum whom pulsatilla could have saved to family and friends.

Remember, however, that just as you would remove a nail or a splinter from a palm or a sole before you would administer sedum or hypericum to prevent tetanus, so you would, as far as possible, remove an exciting cause from a pulsatilla case (or any other case) and then apply your remedy, because in the foreknowledge of God and from all eternity (and I am not a Predestinarian) this remedy was destined or predestined to and for that individual and those like her. The little black-eyed, black-haired ignatia brunette will not become a pulsatilla subject through environment, physical influences or mental surroundings. So then if an exciting cause—an obstacle or obstruction—be in the way of the indicated remedy, find it if possible, and if possible remove it. Our fair-haired, blonde-complexioned, blue-eyed, impulsive, April-showering, sunshiny girl may be never so much a pulsatilla patient; the roses may have faded from her cheeks and the rubies from her lips; she may need medicine, and that medicine may undeniably be pulsatilla. Be not astonished if pulsatilla fails to restore the roses and the rubies, if she is suffering from disappointment in love—if, for example, the hero of her heart's worship be forbidden her home and the little tender tendrils of her affection be reaching and yearning for the banished lover. Restore him, and then, if there be damage left, pulsatilla will repair it. So also in later life she may have a cruel or an indifferent husband, whom it would be a God's blessing to remove perhaps, but whose treatment of her might by judicious management be modified; or a wayward son, who might by wise counsel and good influences be reclaimed; or the struggle with poverty might be eased up a bit by calling the attention of some association or confederation of good women to her condition; but the exciting and ever-present cause, whatever it may be, must be removed if possible, or as much of it as possible, for while the thorn remains in the flesh the remedy must necessarily be handicapped.